

Marine Corps Distance Learning Program

Deployable Learning Resource Center

1. Background. The Marine Corps Distance Learning Program (MCDLP) provides infrastructure upon which technology-based instruction is delivered to Marines when and where training is needed. The program also initiates and manages the development of distance learning courseware to support Professional Military Education, MOS skill progression training, cross functional training applicable to all Marines, and to a limited extent, entry level training. Computer-based interactive multimedia instruction is the primary instructional medium, however, video teletraining is also used. Courseware is delivered via the Marine Corps Learning Network (MarineNet) – a dedicated intranet within the Marine Corps Enterprise Network. MarineNet will undergo planned transition into the Navy Marine Corps Intranet in FY02.

Access to electronic courseware is available from any network connected PC on a base or station where MarineNet has been installed. The MCDLP will field nearly 100 electronic classrooms Corps-wide by 2006 in order to provide service to Marines who do not have a computer regularly available to them. MarineNet infrastructure is currently fielded aboard most Marine Corps installations.

2. Deployable Learning Resource Center. The Deployable Learning Resource Center (DLRC) is a hardware component of the MCDLP that will provide Marines with access to electronic courseware while deployed aboard ship or from remote locations ashore. The system offers the same functionality as fixed site equipment and incorporates a modular design for maximum configuration flexibility. Fifty-four DLRCs will be fielded at the MEF level between FY 03-06 for subsequent assignment to operating forces as determined by the Commander.

Each DLRC consists of a server, network switch, and 20 laptop workstations. The server stores and distributes all electronic training courseware and hosts the necessary management tools to monitor, test, and record student progress. The system is capable of serving remote user workstations by connecting to external networks including shipboard Local Area Networks (LAN) and shore-based Metropolitan Area Networks (MAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) infrastructure.

3. Application. The DLRC is intended for use in the following ship and shore-based operational environments:

Deployed Shipboard

The DLRC may be deployed aboard various Navy ships and, where available, may interface with the ship's LAN providing all USMC/USN approved users access to training courseware. As a self-contained learning system, the DLRC is designed to place little or no burden on limited ship to shore bandwidth resources.

Remote Deployment and Fixed-Base Sites

The DLRC may also be deployed with MEUs and other operational units to land-based remote sites. The system can be configured to operate in expeditionary environments or

existing facilities to provide training opportunities that were previously unavailable. Similar to shipboard application, the DLRC may interface with existing MAN/WAN networks to provide all approved users with access to distance learning courseware.

If available connections exist, the DLRC can utilize a reach-back mode to connect with the Marine Corps Institute Automated Information System (MCIAIS) for information updates. This operation does not require significant time or bandwidth allotments and will allow training program management, student tracking, and enrollment in Distance learning courses. Upon course completion, student-training records are electronically updated in the Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS).

4. Operational Evaluation. A prototype Deployable Learning Resource Center has undergone and passed required Space Warfare Systems Command testing for shipboard compatibility and compliance with USN IT-21 standards. The system deployed with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) during late 2002 for assessment of operational capabilities and benefit to Marines embarked aboard ships.

5. Conclusion. While each Armed Service within the DOD has undertaken its own distributed learning initiative, the Marine Corps Distance Learning Program is currently a leader in this application. The development of the Deployable Learning Resource Center is a continuance of the MCDLP's mission to increase operational readiness by providing increased training opportunities to Marines anytime, anywhere.



DLRC